

Precautions against West Nile virus recommended

August 24 2012



"Fight the bite!" was the advice Vice President for Administration Kevin Kirby gave to Rice students, faculty and staff in an email Wednesday about precautions against the West Nile virus.

He noted that catchphrase is being used by Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services, and shared tips from that department for minimizing the risk of being bitten by disease-carrying mosquitoes:

- Stay indoors at dawn and dusk, which are peak mosquito-biting times. If you have to go outside at these times, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, preferably loose and light-colored.
- Defend yourself from mosquitoes by using an [insect repellent](#)

that contains DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535. Be sure to apply the repellent as directed on the label.

Kirby said such precautions might be particularly beneficial to employees who work outdoors and students who engage in field sports and outdoor recreation.

He noted that a front-page story in the Aug. 22 Houston Chronicle reported that three West Nile virus-related deaths of older adults have occurred in Houston this summer. The story also reported that Harris County would begin an aerial spray of the insecticide naled (Dibrom) Wednesday night to combat the spread of the virus.

Kirby shared additional information from Harris County officials about the virus: Houston's [warm weather](#) benefits the mosquito population, including the [Culex mosquito](#), which is the predominant species in Harris County that carries the West Nile virus. Mosquitoes spread the [virus](#) after they feed on infected birds and then bite people, other birds and animals.

People over 50 years of age have the highest risk of developing a severe illness from the [West Nile virus](#). Most people who are infected show no or only mild symptoms, such as a low-grade fever and headache. When symptoms of infection do occur, they usually appear five to 15 days after the person was bitten. More severe symptoms can include a high fever, stiff neck, muscle weakness, disorientation, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), coma and, in rare cases, death.

Provided by Rice University

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